

his career,

keeps hope alive with a

## HE'S STILL A new album HONKY-TONK W

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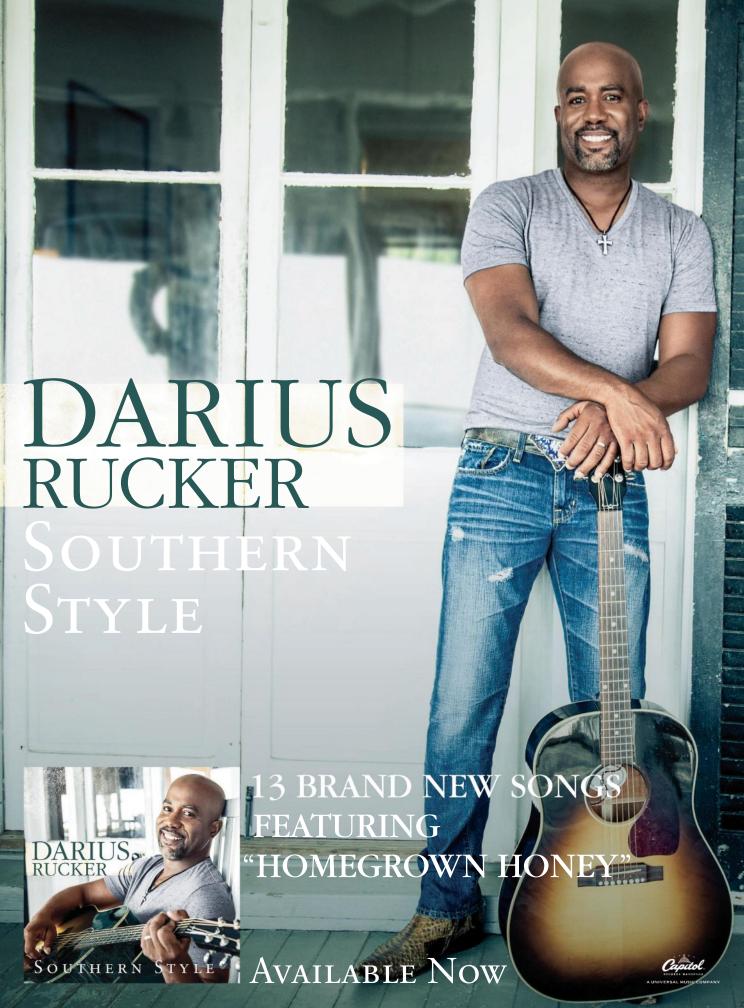
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spring blowout



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#### THE SONGS, VIDEOS AND BITS OF COUNTRY CULTURE WE JUST CAN'T GET ENOUGH OF RIGHT NOW!

#### Continuing to Be Different ► SAM HUNT has delivered the video for his latest gold-selling single, "Take

Your Time," and it's something not a lot of people expected to see, not only from him but from a lyrical standpoint. The dark, cinematic video sheds light on domestic violence as Sam serves as a bystander wanting to help.





#### **Good Girls Club**

#### ▲ ASHLEY MONROE

is bound to turn some heads with her new single, "On to Something Good," which combines a soulful backbeat with lush instrumentation and an undeniable message of hope. On the heels of her No. 1 duet with Blake Shelton, "Lonely Tonight," this could be something great for Ashley.

#### Rodeo Davs

THE AUSTIN RODEO stormed out of the chute on March 14 with a performance by country icon WILLIE **NELSON**. The 15-day rodeo featured a herd of country music's best acts, including DWIGHT YOAKAM, ELI YOUNG BAND, RANDY ROG-**ERS BAND. JOE NICHOLS.** TURNPIKE TROUBADOURS. TYLER FARR, MARTINA McBRIDE and LEE BRICE.





#### **Uptown** (Country) Funk

◀ THOMAS RHETT is not playing it safe by any means for his upcoming second album. His new music mixes Bruno Mars and Motown into modern country for a body-moving hybrid. Next single "Crash and Burn" is a sad tune that'll have you dancing your blues away.

#### **Star-Spangled Boys**

#### THE OAK RIDGE BOYS

describe themselves as college basketball "fanatics," and they proved their dedication to the sport on a weekend in March. The guys drove all night from an appearance in Kansas City,



Mo., to sing the national anthem at the SEC tournament championship game in Nashville the following afternoon. And the Oaks, as usual, were at the top of their game, delivering a harmony-laden performance that was just as perfect as the unbeaten Kentucky Wildcats, who triumphed in the game over Arkansas.

#### THE JUKEBOX

Essential songs from artists featured

**'Second Hand Heart"** "Honky Tonk Man" "Guitars, Cadillacs" "It Won't Hurt" "Little Sister" "Streets of Bakersfield"

"I Sang Dixie" "Long White Cadillac" "You're the One"

"It Only Hurts When I Cry" "Ain't That Lonely Yet" "A Thousand Miles From Nowhere"

"Fast as You"

"Pocket of a Clown" "Heart of Stone" "Things Change" "Crazv Little

Thing Called Love"

"I Want You to Want Me" "Sitting Pretty"

"Blame the Vain"

"Close Up the **Honky Tonks**"

"South of Cincinnati" "This Drinkin' Will Kill Me" "Smoke Along the Track" "Turn It On, Turn It Up"

> "Nothing" "That's Okay"

> > "Listen"

"A Long Way From Home" "A World of Blue"





#### **COVER STORY**

## 44

## Dwight Yoakam

After more than 30 years in the business of music making, the Stetson-sporting mystery man is still doing things his own way. Dwight talks about his new album, recalls some good advice and cuts loose on Sling Blade in this wide-ranging interview.

#### 24 | Gone Fishin'

The guys from Florida Georgia Line, Eric Paslay and other stars share their favorite fishing spots.

#### 50 | C2C

Jason Aldean and Lady Antebellum lead a parade of country stars across the ocean to London's hot music festival.

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The king of spring break revels in one more Florida bash before abdicating the throne.

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The Cowbov hosts his annual Team Roping Classic.

#### 58 | Montgomery Gentry

The duo gets set to join the Kentucky Music Hall of Fame as they release a new single.

#### 62 RaeLynn

The youthful star moves to the head of the class with her Music in Our Schools tour.



### 27 NASH

Kristian Bush took a respite from the Sugarland duo to craft his album *Southern Gravity*, which definitely reflects more than Southern roots. Kristian delves into several of his musical influences and establishes himself as one of our most eclectic songwriters. Plus, Justin Moore plays Check Yes or No.



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Jimmy Wayne.

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DWIGHT BY BRIAN HINELINE/CORBIS: RAELYNN BY JOSH B. CARTER/BMLG; KACEY BY KELLY CHRISTINE SUTTON/UMG ON COVER: DWIGHT COURTESY WARNER BROS. RECORDS; LUKE COURTESY SCHMIDT RELATIONS

#### [ LETTERS ]

Dear Readers:

**DWIGHT YOAKAM** is in a league of his own. That's why we chose him for our latest cover story. Dwight is not only talented, but he has a lot (and we mean a *lot*) to say. On the eve of the release of his new album, Second Hand Heart, he talks to Country Weekly about everything from his most enduring recordings to the Vietnam War and Sling Blade. Our deputy editor, Jim Casey, had the pleasure of talking to Dwight, and, as you will see when you read the story, he captures the

dizzying experience of interviewing Dwight. So check out

our cover story on page 44 and get lost in Dwight Yoakam's world.

With the stories we have for you in this issue, it certainly feels like spring is in the air (at least in Nashville). We are with **LUKE BRYAN** for his last hurrah in Panama City Beach, we have the stars dishin' on fishin, we head over to London for C2C and **RAELYNN** goes back to school.

In this week's NASH we sit down with **KRISTIAN BUSH** to talk about his first solo album following his success in **SUGARLAND** with **JENNIFER NETTLES**. We talk to **WILL HOGE** about family values,

KIMBERLY SCHLAPMAN of LITTLE BIG TOWN discusses "Girl Crush," **JUSTIN MOORE** checks yes or no, and so much more.

Don't miss next week's issue, on stands April 13, when we talk to **REBA MCENTIRE** about the next chapter of her career.

See you next week!

LISA KONICKI, Editor in Chief

#### **Tell Us What YOU Think!**

MAIL: Letters, Country Weekly, 506 2nd Ave. South, Suite 200, Nashville, TN 37210. SEND E-MAIL TO: letters@countryweekly.com

Please include your name, address and daytime phone number with all correspondence. Country Weekly assumes no responsibility for returning unsolicited material, including, but not limited to, photographs, artwork, manuscripts and letters. Letters may be edited for clarity and length.

#### **MOVIE MAGIC**

I have a suggestion. Someone needs to make a movie of Roy Rogers and Dale Evans' life. The perfect person to play the part of Roy Rogers would be Clint Black, with his wife, Lisa, as Dale Evans. Please pass on this suggestion to Clint and Lisa. Thank you.

-BECKY LOCKE Angola, Ind.

EDITOR'S REPLY: I think you just did, Becky. Thanks for sharing.

#### INSPIRATIONAL LOVE

I was so lifted up by the story of Joey and Rory Feek ["True Faith", Jan. 26]. What an inspirational story. The love they have for each other and their family is so inspirational. Their baby girl, Indiana, is adorable. I hope they keep up their faith and I wish them all the best.

-LAURIE DUBSON Chenoa, III.

#### **NO RADIO PLAY**

Why is Danielle Bradberry not getting any airplay? Seems to me it's the same artists and same songs every day. Time to give the young ladies some radio time.

 RICK FRANKLIN Prattville, Ala.

#### CORRECTION

In our March 23 issue, we incorrectly noted that Alan Jackson dropped out of high school to pursue music ["State Your Case"]. In fact, Alan is a proud graduate of Newnan High School in Newnan, Ga. We regret the error and sincerely apologize to Alan.

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SUNDAY, MAY 17

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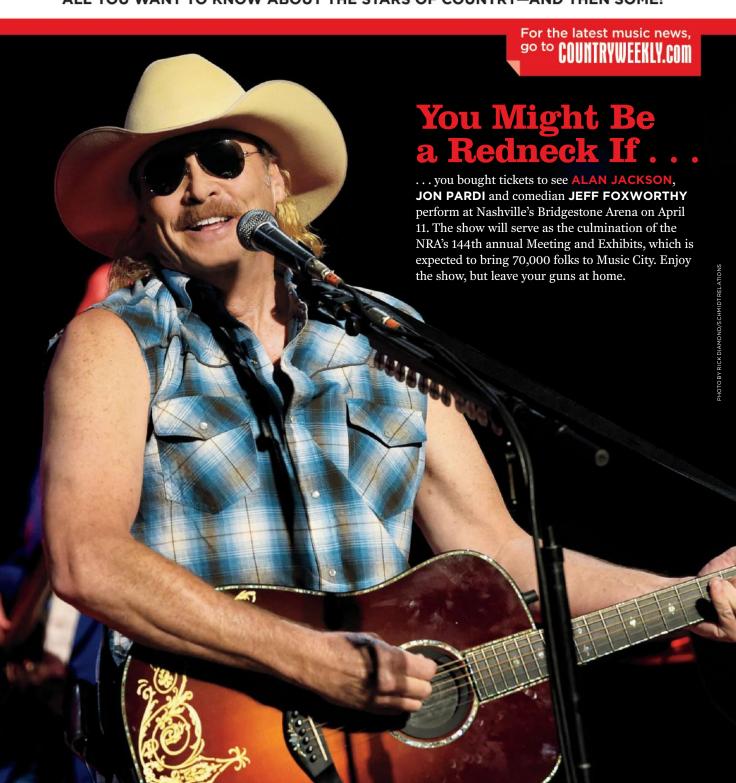
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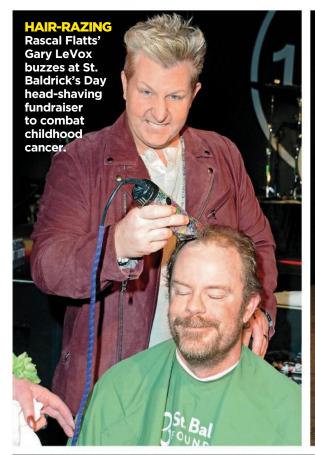


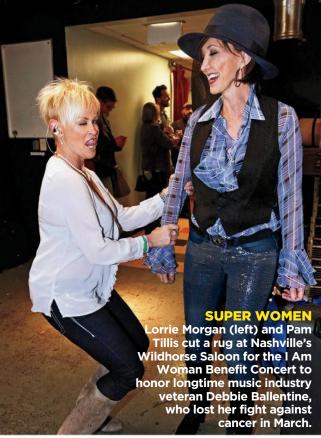


## 

ALL YOU WANT TO KNOW ABOUT THE STARS OF COUNTRY—AND THEN SOME!









#### The Dirt on Luke

The Country Music Hall of Fame and Museum is getting down and dirty this summer with the exhibition LUKE BRYAN: DIRT ROAD DIARY, which opens on May 22 and runs through Nov. 8. The showcase will examine Luke's roots and his rise to stardom since beginning his music career in the mid-2000s. It will also take a look at the reigning CMA Entertainer of the Year's upbringing on a rural Georgia peanut farm and how that helped shape him into the man he is today. Fans will get an up-close glimpse at Luke's stage clothes (we're betting there will be some extra-tight jeans), instruments, awards, photos and other unique memorabilia

from his personal collection.



#### WISE CHOICE

Songwriter extraordinaire **CRAIG WISEMAN** added the 2015 Mississippi Governor's Arts Award for Excellence in Music to his growing list of accolades. Since moving to Nashville in 1985, the Hattiesburg, Miss., native has penned more than 100 charting singles and 21. No. 1 hits, including "Live Like You Were Dying" (Tim McGraw) and "Hillbilly Bone" (Blake Shelton).

Last November, Craig received the ASCAP Heritage Award in commemoration of the performance-rights organization's 100th anniversary.



#### GENIE IN A BOTTLE ...OF WHISKEY

ABC's Nashville is adding a Mickey Mouse Club pop icon to its ensemble cast this spring, and no, it's not Britney Spears. Instead, CHRISTINA AGUILERA has signed on to the popular television series for a multi-episode arc in which she'll play Jade St. John, a pop star who, despite her record label's wishes, wants to follow her heart and cut a country album. As a coach on The Voice, this could be the country cred Christina needs to give Blake Shelton a run for his money.

### CREEPIN' **AIN'T EASY**

For a self-proclaimed outsider, ERIC CHURCH doesn't much care for people who break the rules outside his own shows. Eric and his team have filed a new lawsuit against vendors who try to sell unlicensed merchandise with his likeness and logo outside his shows. The lawsuit is seeking an injunction that would bar the vendors from selling the knockoff goods, which he claims are of lesser quality than the official ones available inside the venues. This is hardly Eric's first time taking on folks looking to make a buck off of him without permission: in 2014, he went after ticket scalpers who had violated sales limits for his show in Minneapolis, canceling 902 tickets and putting them back on sale for fans.



#### Musical **Notes**

#### **ALBUMS**

#### **RAY STEVENS**

returns to his comedy roots with his new album, Here We Go Again!, now



in release. Among the side-splitting selections are "Taylor Swift Is Stalkin' Me" and "There Must Be a Pill for This."

#### JOHN CONLEE

will release a new album, Classics 2, on April 7. The album features some of John's past hits like



"Harmony" and "Domestic Life" along with new material.

#### **BOOKS** THE MAN FROM MUSCLE SHOALS, profiling the life and career of record producer RICK HALL, hit retail-

ers March 21. Rick owns the

popular FAME studios in Muscle Shoals, Ala., where Aretha Franklin, The Rolling Stones and country acts like George Jones, Marty Stuart and Billy Currington have all recorded.

#### **SPOTTED**

**COLE SWINDELL** at Silver Dollar Saloon in downtown Nashville. **CHRIS YOUNG** at popular Music Row-area restaurant Tin Roof. JASON ISBELL and his wife en-

VINCE GILL and wife AMY GRANT cheering on the Belmont University men's basketball team at the OVC championship game in Nashville.

#### **BABY NEWS**

Top songwriter **DALLAS DA-**VIDSON and wife Natalia: son Dallas Gerald Davidson Jr., born Feb. 25.



#### **WEDDING BELLS**

JASON ALDEAN and fiancée **BRITTANY KERR** tied the knot in a ceremony in Mexico on



March 21. Among those in attendance were Jason's daughters, Keeley and Kendyl.

Stars seen in and around Nashville: joying dinner at Silo.



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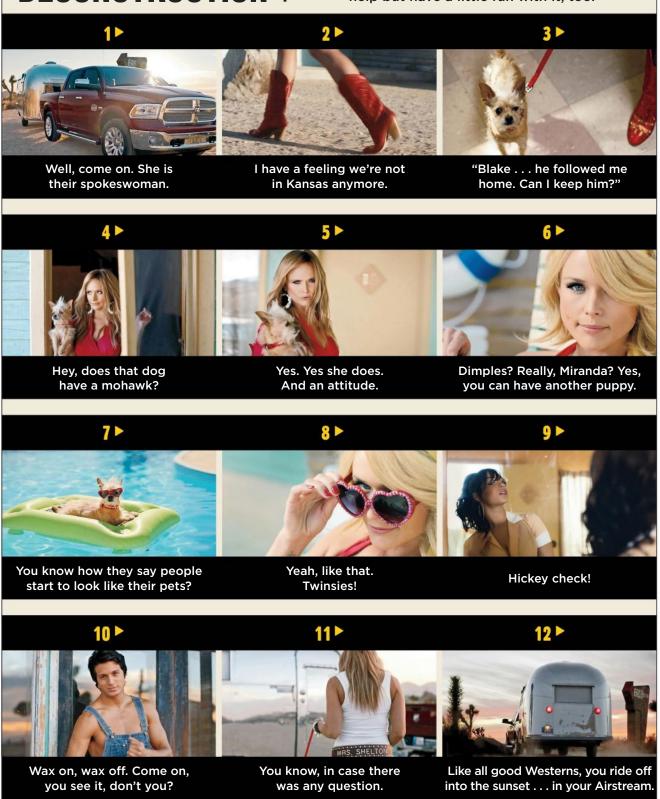
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#### the mix

#### **APPETITE FOR DECONSTRUCTION**

She can be sweet, she can be tough, she can be sexy and she can be funny. And in her newest video, "Little Red Wagon," MIRANDA LAMBERT is all of that. We are crazy for the video, but we can't help but have a little fun with it, too.









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#### the mix

#### **ALBUM RELEASE CALENDAR**



**KRISTIAN BUSH** Southern Gravity



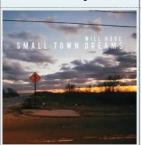
**REBA McENTIRE** Love Somebody



FARR Suffer in Peace



**POLAR POWER** 



HOGE Small Town Dreams



**DWIGHT** YOAKAM Second Hand Heart



**MITCHELL TENPENNY** Black Crow



Glennie, will receive their awardsalong with a cash prize of more that

\$100,000—from Sweden's King Carl

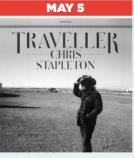
XVI in Stockholm on June 9.



**LaFARGE** Something in the Water



**SARABETH** SaraBeth EP



**CHRIS STAPLETON** Traveller



Ready to tie one on? How about a pair . . . of running shoes? CRAIG MORGAN is chal-



lenging you, along with his friends and family, to take part in the Billy's Place 5K to benefit the **DICKSON** COUNTY CRAIG MORGAN FOUN-DATION. The event, the second of its kind so far, takes place April 12 at 1 p.m. and begins at Montgomery Bell State Park in Dickson, Tenn. Details on this fun day in the outdoors are available on Craig's website. Money raised for the race supports

foster children in Middle Tennessee.



**RAY WYLIE** HUBBARD Ruffian's Misfortune



**ZAC BROWN BAND** Jekyll



**SHELBY** LYNNE I Can't *Imagine* 



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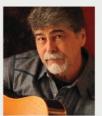
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SUR







Artists subject to change



### PAR EXCELLENCE

**DARIUS RUCKER WAS** enjoying a sunny afternoon on the golf course with his buddy Charles Kelley (of Lady Antebellum) when he got a little thrown off his game by a particular topic.

"We were playing golf, and Charles looked at me and said, 'Man, how come we've never written a song together?" Darius remembers. "I thought about it for a minute because we've known each other for a long time. We've toured together and they sang on 'Wagon Wheel' with me. I just couldn't believe that we'd never written a song together!"

Darius told Charles to pick a date and he would make sure to be there. After settling on a good night when they were both in Nashville,

Darius and Charles linked up in the studio with Lady A's producer, Nathan Chapman, to see what their three minds could create. Luckily for Darius and Charles, Nathan already had a little riff and chorus idea that everyone unanimously felt were perfect to continue working with. "He started playing what he had, and I was like, 'I'm lovin' it!" Darius says. "We dived right in and started writing."

As the song began to take shape, the lead character—a country girl who lives in New York City-began to develop a lot of color, where they soon coined her as a "homegrown honey."

"I loved the hook," says Darius, beaming. "We tried to have some fun with that idea, and we did just

#### "HOMEGROWN

← Performed by **Darius Rucker** 

Written by Darius Rucker, Charles Kelley, **Nathan Chapman** 



If Nathan Chapman's name sounds familiar to you, it's likely due to the fact that he has produced some of the hottest music to come out of Nashville in recent years. His work with Taylor Swift alone landed him CMAs, AMAs and even Grammys, but he has also worked with these artists:

> **Lady Antebellum The Band Perry Shania Twain Krystal Keith Jimmy Wayne Jypsi Point of Grace**

that. It was so much fun writing that song. It was cool."

Once "Homegrown Honey" was finished, Darius loved the song so much that he put it in with the other tunes slated for his fourth country album, Southern Style. He went on to release the song as the lead single from the project, marking yet another Top 10 song in his country music career.

"The thing that I loved when we started writing it was it was something I'd never done before in country music," says Darius. "That was the first kind of song like that that I've done, so we were having a good time. I couldn't be happier with how it turned out!"

ALANNA CONAWAY

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2

#### **COUNTRY STYLE**

Romper Room

It's the bane of every girl's existence-finding the perfect outfit. What bottoms go with what tops? And let's not even get started on shoes and accessories! Fortunately, we can look to our country music sisters for a smart move that eliminates some of the hassle. We spy sweet and sexy jumpsuits and rompers on our girlfriends everywhere from sidewalks to stages, and we like it a lot. They can easily be dressed up or down for whatever your plans are, and just a little digging on the Internet finds everything from casual to career to formal versions at a price point for every budget. So, get a jump on your jumpsuit.

- TAMMY RAGUSA







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### Come On Over

#### **SHANIA TWAIN** DROPS BY *THE CHEW* TO TALK ABOUT HER TOUR AND HELP WITH A DELICIOUS DISH.

#### **SHANIA TWAIN IS ABOUT TO**

embark on her farewell concert dates, the Rock This Country Tour, on June 5 in Seattle. The tour will take the sizzling superstar throughout the U.S. and her native Canada, and she talked about the upcoming road shows on ABC's The Chew on March 4.

Shania explained that after her two-

year stint at Caesars Palace in Las Vegas, she wanted to tour one last time so that fans who could not make the Vegas shows could still see her. The Chew's cohost Clinton Kelly also brought Shania, a pretty expert cook herself, into the show's kitchen to help with a delicious artichoke and feta crostini dish. A crostini, similar to bruschetta, is an Italian

appetizer typically consisting of a small slice of toasted bread (the name means "little toast" in Italian) with toppings added. Usually, the dish has a tomatobased topping, but Clinton went outside the box with this recipe.

Shania loved Clinton's creation and you will, too.

- BOB PAXMAN

#### Artichoke and Feta Crostini

#### **MAKES 4 SERVINGS**

PREHEAT oven to 425°. **PLACE** bread slices on a sheet tray. **DRIZZLE** with olive oil. **PLACE** in the oven until golden brown. **REMOVE** and set aside. **PREHEAT** oven to broil. PLACE a large sauté pan over medium heat. **ADD** the pine nuts until golden brown. ADD 2 tbsp. of olive oil. Once hot, ADD the artichokes, beans and garlic. **SEASON** with salt and pepper and cook for a few minutes until fragrant. ADD wine. **BRING** to a simmer and cook reduced. **REMOVE** from heat and ADD the spinach. TOSS to combine and to wilt the spinach. **DIVIDE** the artichoke-bean mixture on top of the toasted bread slices. TOP with crumbled feta cheese. PLACE under the broiler until golden brown. **REMOVE** from oven and set aside.

**PLACE** crostini on a platter and **DRIZZLE** the tops with olive oil.





## **STRIKING MATCHES**

#### **MEMBERS:**

Sarah Zimmerman: vocals, guitar and mandolin Justin Davis: vocals and guitar

#### **HOMETOWN:**

Sarah: Philadelphia; Justin: Atlanta

#### **CURRENT SINGLE:**

"Hanging on a Lie"

#### WHY YOU SHOULD KNOW THEM:

Their songs, including "Hanging on a Lie," have been featured on the ABC series Nashville. Since forming the duo at Belmont University about seven years ago, Sarah and Justin have made their Grand Ole Opry debut and toured with Vince Gill, Hunter Hayes and rock group Train. Their debut album, Nothing but the Silence, was released in March.

#### **GIRL WITH GUITAR**

JUSTIN: The first week of school at Belmont, we were in these guitar seminar classes. What they were doing in one class was going down the roll and randomly picking two people and you just had to improvise something with this stranger. They picked me and then they called Sarah. I asked Sarah, "Do you know any blues we can jam on?" She whipped out her slide and just proceeded to leave everyone's jaw on the floor, including mine. Right then and there, we said we should do that again, and here we are.

**SARAH:** I grew up playing a lot of classic rock and blues. I think I bring some of the Philly influence to our sound.

#### WHAT'S IN THE NAME

J: We started writing and once we had a couple of songs, we tried playing at some of these writers' rounds in Nashville. It was just Sarah and Justin-no band name. People would come up to us after a show and ask what the name of our band was. We were searching for a name and were getting way too clever with it. We said, "Striking Matches," which kind of evoked what we did in live shows. It's a very energy-driven name. S: Our first real show was at the Bluebird Cafe in Nashville. We had this conversation afterwards about, "Well, I guess we're a band now." It was official.

#### THE NASHVILLE BREAK

S: Having our music played on Nashville helped us so much,

especially with recognition. People would hear the song in the show and go to iTunes looking for it and they would find our version as well. It had an international reach. We went overseas and played "When the Right One Comes Along" and the audience knew every word. I just cried. It's been really fun to have that connection with the show. **J:** We've been so grateful for the fan base we've been able to build.

#### **NOTHING BUT MUSIC**

S: Everyone asks about the relationship. People want to know if we're married to each other [they're not] or if we're brother and sister. The reality is, we're just making music together.

- BOB PAXMAN

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### **COUNTRY WEEKLY**

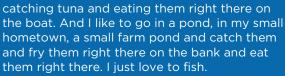
THE INSIDE STORIES ON COUNTRY MUSIC'S HOTTEST STARS

## Gone Fishing

When the spring showers of April bring the flowers of May, it means it's time to wet a line. From the trout streams to the bass lakes to the deep seas, and everything in between, we asked some of our favorite country stars what they like most about going fishing.

#### BRETT **ELDREDGE**

I love fishing for everything. I like to go deep-sea fishing. I love



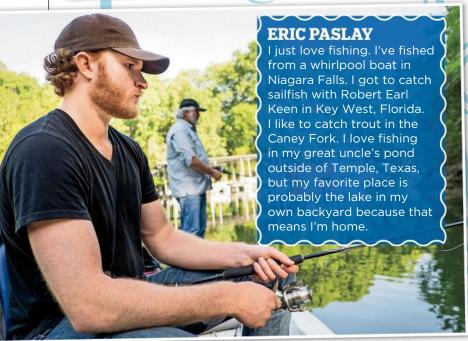




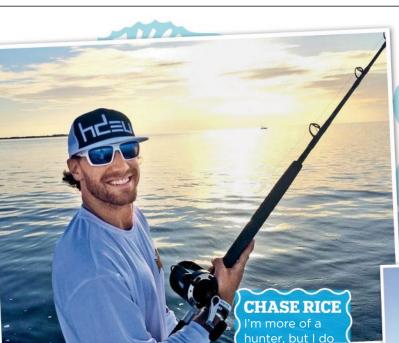
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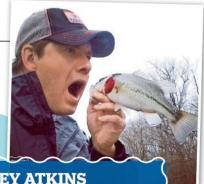
I'm from Arkansas, so we'd go to the White River and do some trout fishing. There's some big rainbows in that river.





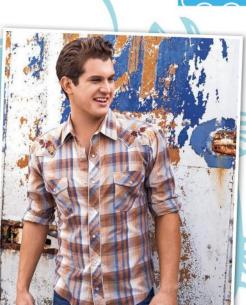






#### **RODNEY ATKINS**

[My son] Eli and I went to Lake Okeechobee and had a blast fishing for largemouth. We also caught an 800-pound bull shark in Destin one night. It was crazy!



hunter, but I do enjoy fishing on any lake for bass

#### TERRI CLARK

There's no place I'd rather be than in my boat on Lake Erie, which is where my cottage is. That's honestly about the only place I get the time to fish. I don't care for cleaning fish—too much work—so I'm bass fishing, largemouth and perch.

#### **JON PARDI**

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I grew up about 10 minutes from Lake Berryessa in Northern California. You can catch all kinds of fish in there—bass, trout, catfish, salmon, bluegill. I like catching bass because, honestly, I'm not much of a fisherman. I don't have the patience for it, but with bass, you just drop a line and reel them in. It's in and out and not as much waiting. Maybe I should become a Bassmaster.

Illinois is celebrating its state fish with the inaugural Bluegill Music Festival on July 4 in Benton, Ill. The one-day event pairs two things that go together as good as fish 'n' chips—country music and fishing. ELI YOUNG BAND, LOCASH, **CLAYTON ANDERSON** and many others will perform at this all-day festival on Rend Lake Dam.

You might require a little silence when you dip a line into a glassy lake, but when you're stocking your tackle box, loading the boat or digging for night crawlers, a little motivational music can't hurt. Check out our Top 10 fishing playlist.

> **Nitty Gritty Dirt Band** "Fishin' in the Dark"

**Brad Paisley** "I'm Gonna Miss Her (The Fishin' Song)"

> **Craig Campbell** "Fish"

**Justin Moore** "Bait a Hook"

**Eric Paslay** "If the Fish Don't Bite"

**Pam Tillis** "Betty's Got a Bass Boat"

> **Trace Adkins** "Just Fishin"

Robert Earl Keen "Five Pound Bass"

**Trent Willmon** "Cold Beer and a Fishin' Pole"

**Rhett Akins and Dallas Davidson** "Weapons of Bass Destruction"



One of my favorite places to fish is Oklahoma. When I was growing up there, my dad and I would do what we called "pond hopping." Dad knew where all the hot places were and we would drive from one to another. We'd hole up in a place and get our lawn chairs out and spend the whole day fishing. I have some great memories of that. [My wife] Shawna and I have moved down by the Gulf near Mobile, but I haven't been able to do any fishing there. I would love to find the time, though. As far as eating, it's hard to beat crappie. I love to go crappie fishing.

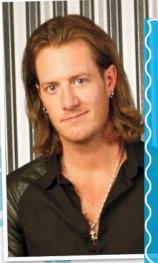


I found a couple places in Nashville, but nothing beats my little spot in Florida. I got a couple spots in Florida, in Ormond Beach, Daytona Beach area on some golf courses and then some ponds that end up going off in the Tamoka River—that's some of my favorite bass fishing, largemouth bass.



#### CRAIG CAMPBELL

The Altamaha River where I grew up. we used to set bush hooks with milk jugs as markers, then come back the next morning to check them. As we would be pulling up to each bush hook, you could tell if something was on the line if the jug was bouncing the right way. We would catch these huge catfish—up to 60 pounds each! Now that was fun, getting those hogs in the boat.



#### TYLER HUBBARD of Florida **Georgia Line**

My favorite spot to fish right now is just a little pond at my house. I've got a couple ponds that we fish in, just small, little ponds. We catch bass and bream and catfish in there. Anytime ( being at the house, but especially if I can do some fishing out there.









# Hamily Man

WILL HOGE celebrates family values in music and at home.

VISITORS TO NASHVILLE TODAY see a city stretching its muscles, with new buildings expranting slavaged in protty much over

ings sprouting skyward in pretty much every neighborhood. There's a hustle and bustle in restaurants and, of course, music in every club up and down Lower Broadway.

When Will Hoge looks around, a lot of what he sees in his imagination is gone—mirages of a smaller town, a more modest skyline. The

Nashville he knew as he was growing up in Franklin, just south of Music City, has been razed and replaced by office towers and pricey condos.

Yet, as far as he's concerned, its heart is unchanged. The values that mattered to his family when he was young still flourish here. And they

continue to guide him as a husband, father and artist, as reflected in his new album, *Small Town Dreams*.

From "Growing Up Around Here," a rugged but nostalgic anthem to "this taillight town" he calls home, to "They Don't Make Them Like They Used To," a tribute to his father's strength and sacrifices on behalf of those he loved, *Small Town Dreams* celebrates

the character of small-town America. Will insists that even in a modern metropolis like Nashville, that character can endure.

"My great-grandfather owned a grocery store in the middle of Hillsboro Village 80 years ago," he muses, referencing a Nashville neighborhood now abloom with









ents grew up here. My parents went to high school here. My family has seen changes here for dozens and dozens of years. And anytime there's change, there's some sort of challenge. But Nashville does seem to be a city that holds on to those values. The roots here are deep enough that I don't hear anybody being afraid of it."

cafes and boutiques. "My grandpar-

Since striking out on his own to sing and play on the road, Will has seen that folks far beyond Middle Tennessee share those same beliefs. "A lot of the people that come to see me now started to see me when they were 18 or 19 years old-and now they're in their 30s and have children. I've started to see that these people also want to have a family and some sort of stability and still be able to go out on weekends and see your friends and maintain some sort of youthful vigor. So I don't think that's regional. I think that's everywhere."

What makes Will different from most of his audience is that his business keeps him away from home eight months out of each year. It's not easy to be as involved as he'd like when he's gone that much. But he and his family have found ways to make the most out of the moments they can share.

"First, I don't travel as much as I used to," Will points out. "We used to do 250 shows a year. And when I say we're working for eight months, it's not a solid eight months. I'll be gone Thursday, Friday and Saturday and be back home by Monday morning. Nothing makes it easy to be gone, but we're fortunate with Skype and cellphones. You can stay in touch way better than you could even 10 years ago. As hard as I work on the road, I work every bit as hard if not harder when I'm home to make sure it's family-centric. I do the pick-up and drop-off line at school. We do family dinners, sitting around the table and talking about our day. That's the only way it's ever gonna work. It's a partnership and we work hard to keep it that way."

Will, his wife, Julia, and their sons, Liam, 7, and George, 4, also make sure to observe at least one important weekly ritual. "Every Tuesday is pizza



AM/GEORGE/JULIA BY PEYTON HOGE/SWEET TALK PUBLICITY; PEYTON & WILL COURTESY WILL HOGE; OTHER PH. JULIA HOGE/SWEET TALK PUBLICITY





and movie night," Will says, with a laugh. "And the kids are starting to take up golf with me, which adds a whole 'nother level of awesome."

In fact, Liam has already one-upped his dad on the green. "We went to play together late last year for the first time," Will says, grinning. "Once I'd get to the green, I'd let him putt. On the very first hole, he got a 12-footer with a slight break to the right. Then I putted, and I missed it. So Liam walked up, grabbed his putter and just knocked the heck out of the ball. It hit the cup, bounced two feet up in the air and went straight back down into the hole. I couldn't believe it! His face lit up and he went, 'Daddy! Can we get golf shoes for me?' And I knew he was hooked."

- BOB DOERSCHUK



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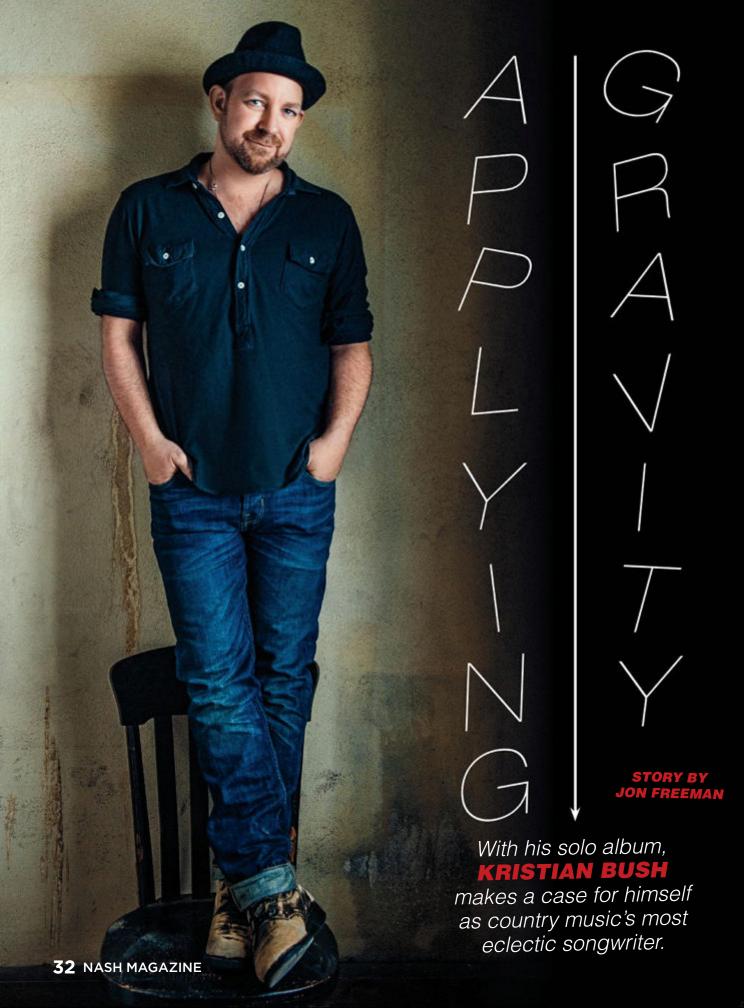
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FOR THE MOST PART, every singer/ songwriter picking the strings for a living is a product of his or her influences from childhood and beyond, whether in direct tribute or reaction against. That's not really a revolutionary idea so much as accepted truth, which in country music means the oft-name-checked George Strait and Merle Haggard or rockers like Lynyrd Skynyrd and Aerosmith.

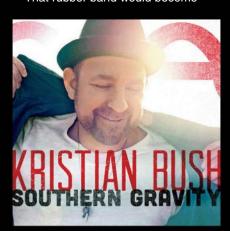
Kristian Bush certainly has plenty of that in his background, but the male half of Sugarland brings an even wider array of musical reference points to his solo country debut, *Southern Gravity*. As best he can recall, it started during his childhood in Sevierville, Tenn.—also the hometown of Dolly Parton. Kristian heard country music on WIVK out of Knoxville and gospel on a local AM station.

"I would listen to the country countdown, because that was the only thing you could get," he recalls. "And I would be emotionally invested as an 8-yearold in whether Eddie Rabbitt is going up a spot or not. I think the mythology of everything [was] created then."

At the same time, Kristian was getting his musical training through the experimental Suzuki Method, which places emphasis on listening and immersion to teach it like a language. He heard a series of classical pieces on repeat, day in, day out.

"The theory was, by the time your body could physically make those noises, you would know what order to put them in and what they needed to sound like. My exposure was to Bach and Vivaldi and Alabama and Eddie Rabbitt," he says, laughing. "I started with this really stretchy rubber band of what I knew of as music."

That rubber band would become



even more elastic through the mid-'80s, as MTV asserted its cultural dominance and star-making power. In those nonstop clips, Kristian discovered a band from Georgia that would become one of his key influences, along with an entire world of '80s punk, new wave and pop hits.

"I remember in 1982, maybe, hearing R.E.M. for the first time and my brain was processing harmonies that sounded like Appalachian harmonies that were done over totally different kinds of beats, that were done with banjos and mandolins and electric guitars," says Kristian, who calls Atlanta his home. "I couldn't understand what the guy was singing, I couldn't hear his words."

By his teens, Kristian was trying to combine all that exposure into his own songs and recordings, with varying degrees of success. That improved with time and lots of trial and error, but the processes of writing and recording are inextricably linked for him.

"There were these stages that I learned about music. So, it's one thing to write it, it's another thing to rehearse it, but it's a whole 'nother thing to



#### BUILDING BLOCKS

Kristian made his first recordings as a 13-year-old, which he calls "terrible," but still values having learned the process of making records early on. Understanding what went into a recording and how that relates to the mechanics of a song, he says, are ultimately what pushed him to make music his life.

"As unlikely as it is, when I look back, everything looks like there was a plan, and when you look forward it always looks like chaos," he says. "But when you look back, of course, this is what I was supposed to do, or this is what I couldn't not do. Whether they pay me for it, whether I got a record deal or not, that's all kind of left up to fate and ambition, but I've always felt qualified to be where I am, wherever that is, as a recording artist."

He also has the confidence to examine his own work and others' objectively, serving as a thoughtful and



careful editor to put out the best creation possible.

"I'm not a very angry ego guy in the making of this stuff, which is I think maybe why I end up in duos and bands," he says, laughing. "The thing for me is what we make. It's less about me and more about the thing we make. If that thing is not right, well, I get anxious."



#### KRISTIAN BUSH CONTINUED

perform it with some sort of feeling," he says. "I was kind of set up to be a recording artist since a young age, like some sort of Russian gymnast."

While Southern Gravity isn't exactly an Olympic balance beam routine, it does confidently put Kristian's years of musical experience, from his days in the duo Billy Pilgrim on through Sugarland, on display. Hints of '80s college rock combine with pedal steel in "Make Another Memory," while the title track sounds a little more like The Band as Kristian waxes lyrical about the modern South. "Flip Flops," on the other hand, has an off-kilter, reggae feel to it.

On the whole, Southern Gravity is also a remarkably positive album. There's a noticeable lack of hurtin' and cheatin', with only "House on the Beach" alluding to an air of exhaustion and "Feeling Fine California" occurring in the bewildering aftermath of a breakup. In large part, the songs are as sunny and personable as the man who wrote and recorded them.

"People say, 'Kristian, you're so happy, you see the good side of everything.' And I say, 'Well, what are my options?" he says, laughing. "As a philosophy, when I do put pen to paper [and] turn on the computer or the microphone to record, I'm trying to at least be responsible with what I'm saying."

Kristian wrote nearly 300 songs total between Sugarland's last album, The Incredible Machine, and this release. Not all of them were happy, he points out, but he felt that this album should communicate a certain feeling and chose the ones that best fit. "The energy of a first record to me-because I know what it tastes like—it's hopeful, it's positive and it wants to communicate to you quickly," he explains. "I want you to hear this in the sunshine, and I want you to hear this to feel good. It doesn't push you too dramatically into facing demons, you know, [but] it should push you pretty dramatically into facing, it's about time you had a good day. And sometimes those are





harder to give yourself permission to have than the bad days."

Lead single "Trailer Hitch" was an early indicator of that, bearing a message of generosity with a bubbly pop melody. The person depicted in the song goes from buying a stranger a drink to giving his possessions to people who actually need them. "It's just when we weren't looking, these things accumulated," says Kristian, who partnered with Goodwill for the release of the song. "But part of the release of it is making up this guy's character, who gets obsessed with giving. Have you ever bought a stranger a cup of coffee? It's a really cool feeling."

Even though Kristian's influences



are far and varied, Southern Gravity still fits right in with what's happening in country today. His gravelly, soothing voice bears all the hallmarks of the South, and his narrative storytelling draws on the genre's fundamentals.

"I probably imprinted on country music because of where I'm from," he acknowledges. "My music still has a hugely Appalachian tilt to it. It has that overtone of mandolins and dulcimers, and I do my best to try to weave in this Atlanta that I've soaked in, which is all the back beat and the melody."

But the modern country music landscape is so wide that it somehow makes perfect sense for Kristian to be offering his unique spin on it. That's

where those years of study come in handy and keep him from sounding like a carbon copy of whatever's already on the radio.

"I distill down information from the mathematics of classical melodies, to where's the most emotional turn in an Echo & the Bunnymen song? Plus, where does Emmylou Harris drop her notes and why does that matter? And why did Steve Earle write about that and why does it make me happy?" he explains. "As I move forward I'm like, well, then, if that's country music, I'm in. Because maybe I was writing it the whole time and it was just going through all those different jackets to get to here." N

## EVERYONE'S

FANS ARE HAVING
THEIR OWN LITTLE
LOVE AFFAIR WITH
LITTLE BIG TOWN'S
"GIRL CRUSH"



#### KAREN FAIRCHILD OF LITTLE BIG

Town belted out this memorable first line, I've got a girl crush, and the crowd was mesmerized. The audience in this case was made up of industry pros and media types who had descended on War Memorial Auditorium in Nashville to hear the group premiere their new album, Pain Killer, this past fall. These folks have heard it all, so to have them transfixed is no easy task. But such is the power of "Girl Crush," Little Big Town's current single, which serves up



a twist on the time-honored jealousy theme. The song is wielding a mighty impact at radio and in concert, rising against the tide of good-time party anthems and superficial, throwaway tunes.

The jilted lover in this case basically declares that she has a "crush" on the other woman, wanting whatever she possesses that caused her to lose her guy. This variation on a theme immediately struck Karen and the other female member of Little Big Town, Kimberly Schlapman, as they heard "Girl Crush"



for the first time. As Kimberly tells it, she and Karen came upon the song as they were writing one morning in Nashville with the formidable trio of Liz Rose, Hillary Lindsey and Lori McKenna, who are frequent writing partners.

"Karen and I were the first to hear it," recalls Kimberly. "Before we started writing that day, we were enjoying some girl talk and Karen asked what they had written lately that they were really excited about. I think Liz said, 'You'll never cut this, but we'll play it for you because we love it.' They proceeded to play 'Girl Crush' for us."

Kimberly notes that she and Karen were hooked from the opening passage. And as the story unfolded, it kept their interest. "When it got to the turn, where it tells you that this woman is jealous of the woman who's taken her man," Kimberly says, "it literally took my breath. Karen and I both told them to please not play this song for anyone else. We really wanted it."

Karen and Kimberly brought "Girl Crush" to their male Little Big Town counterparts, Jimi Westbrook and Phillip Sweet. And they developed a "crush" of their own. "There was no hesitation whatsoever," Kimberly recalls. "They had the same reaction we did."

The song made the final cut for their

Pain Killer album. But getting "Girl Crush" as a radio single? They couldn't be sure. Would listeners get it? Was it possibly too clever for its own good?

"We wondered if it would ever have life on radio." Kimberly says. "We hoped that it would." Concert audiences proved an accurate barometer. "After the record came out," Kimberly recalls, "we played 'Girl Crush' for fans and that was always the song they would be tweeting about and talking about at the shows. That seemed to be their favorite across the board. We knew by that reaction that we had

to get 'Girl Crush' out there on the radio."

The reason for the buzz is simple, Kimberly muses. "Girl Crush" relates an experience we've all, unfortunately, been through—that old "rejection" thing. "Every woman I know has been rejected at one time or another," she says. "I know that when I was rejected, I would think, 'What does this woman have that I don't? What am I missing that you need that I can't give you-but she can?' That's why people relate to this."

Kimberly, 45, adds, "I always think of 'Girl Crush' as a modern-day 'Jolene.' I think it's one of the most brilliantly crafted songs I've ever heard."

Little Big Town has drawn from that writers' well before. Lori, Liz and Hillary, who occasionally refer to themselves as the Love Junkies, also wrote the group's hit "Sober," while the four members collaborated with Lori on their 2013 single "Your Side of the Bed." As Kimberly raves of Lori. "It's like getting a degree

in songwriting when you write with her." "Girl Crush" shows no signs of losing momentum, either at radio or with the live concert crowds. "As soon as the first notes hit, people go crazy," Kimberly says with her trademark enthusiasm. "It's like they're waiting for it. They sing it really loud back to us. Karen just delivers it impeccably every night, and the harmonies are fun to do for us. I really think this could be

— BOB PAXMAN

one of our biggest songs."



McKenna





Every year during Country Radio Seminar week, we gather as a country family in Music City to talk, eat, drink, learn and get to know one another a little better. Stations from across the country send their programmers, DJs, promotions crews, sales teams and management execs, and they all travel to Nashville to try to learn from the best about everything from station imaging to social networking to how to be a better on-air personality.

Yes, there are seminars for just about everything you can think of, but at the end of the day, let's be honest, it becomes a big country party. There are events featuring country's biggest stars, from lunches with new artists and meet-and-greets to artist showcases to midnight parties at the Ryman. This year reached a whole new level of party when Dierks Bentley took to Lower Broadway's The Stage with his '90s cover band the Hot Country Knights, and dressed the part with friends that included Randy Houser,



Kip Moore, Charles Kelley from Lady A and Miranda Lambert, who all got into the act by performing their favorite cover songs from Alan Jackson to Shania Twain. Yes, I had to be there! And that was just the first night of CRS.

The next night we jumped on the Sony boat to cruise the Cumberland River with Trisha Yearwood, Chris Young, Chase Rice and so many more. But the finale featured Brad Paisley and a hilarious bit with the great radio host Lon Helton. As Brad was finishing his set, Cheap Trick took over the stage. What a night, which was only halfway through. After the boat docked, it was off to see Keith Urban at a special midnight performance at the Ryman. Talk about intimate. Keith played several instruments by himself onstage for about 30 minutes and then brought out his guitar player and drummer and continued to put on a show that left everyone in awe. I have seen Keith perform 14 times but he has never been more incredible than on that night.

The final night was the sold-out New Faces Show, and let me just say that every new artist there brought it. Sam Hunt, Cole Swindell, Maddie & Tae, Eric Paslay and Frankie Ballard took the stage and brought the industry to its feet.

The future of country music is in great hands. From coast to coast, the radio family comes to Nashville for CRS to meet, learn, chat, eat and drink, and the end result is that we all hope to bring better radio to you, our family.

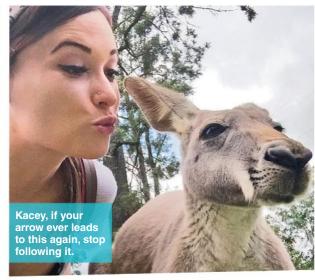


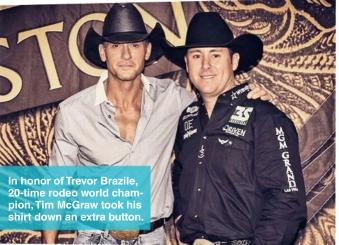
and Sam Hunt

perform at the New Faces Show.

Shawn Parr, a nationally recognized disc jockey and television announcer, is host of **NASH NIGHTS LIVE WITH SHAWN PARR**, airing nightly from 7 p.m. to midnight/ET on stations throughout the country.













## Justin Moore

NASH got the reigning ACM New Artist of the Year to cowboy up for a little game we like to call Check Yes or No.

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I failed my of first time. YES \( \bigcup \)	driver's license test the
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I can speak YES 🔲 N	
	n entire tub of 's in one sitting.



If a stranger walked up to me and asked for a hug, I would hug them.

YES NO M

YES NO M

## County Weekly

SOMETHING BIG IS COMING.

**June 8** 





## TIN ROOF

Many country music singers and songwriters, along with most of the folks who work up and down Music Row, remember when Tin Roof Nashville opened. The notch-above-a-dive-bar unlocked its garage door in 2002 and offered the industry a casual hang with good music, drinks, food, servers and the best queso you've ever wrapped your lips around. Since then, it's remained a favorite hangout for Nashville's country music community and a Friday and Saturday night hot spot for students from the city's nearby colleges.

Since 2002, Tin Roof has opened several new locations across the U.S., including one in downtown Nashville. Just as fun as its midtown sibling, Tin Roof Broadway puts more emphasis on live music, giving their downtown honky-tonkin' neighbors a little competition for tourist traffic as incredible bands lure customers in through the front garage door.

Both venues feature an impressive list of domestic, international and craft beers, along with a fullservice bar and tasty food. If you're at the midtown location, don't walk out without having that queso or the Tin Roof Special: grilled chicken, peanut butter and honey (we add jalapeños, too). And at TR Broadway, the hot chicken torta is so good, you'll be tempted to order two.

— TAMMY RAGUSA





#### A TIP OF THE HAT TO THE MAN WHO

Today, **DVVIGHT YOAKAM** is an acclaimed singer, songwriter, musician and actor. He's a man of many hats, so to speak, wearing each one in his own pronounced way. But 29 years ago in April 1986 at Hollywood's famed Roxy Theatre during the major-label release party of his debut album, Guitars, Cadillacs, Etc., Etc., Dwight was just a displaced 29-year-old following his instincts. Yet it was at this party that Dwight received a pivotal piece of advice that has stayed with him all these years later, and it came from a man he barely knew, Lenny Waronker, a label head at Warner Bros.

"You don't know me very well, I just met you last night, but I've been listening to your music, and I've watched you. If anybody ever tells you to do something that goes against your instincts, don't do it." That's how Dwight retells the story during our 73-minute conversation, which touches on everything from Guitars, Cadillacs, Etc., Etc. to his new album, Second Hand Heart, and a lot in between, including tangents about the Palomino Club ("a benchmark of my world beginning"), the Vietnam

War ("the loss of innocence") and Sling Blade (see sidebar)—three topics that have probably never been discussed in a single conversation with anyone in the history of the world. With Dwight at the helm, you throw interview questions out of the window once he gets the cogs turning. And they are really cranking today in L.A.

If anyone in country music has adhered to the maxim of staying true to his instincts, it's Dwight. And it has paid off in spades for the "hillbilly music" maverick. In



his 30-plus-year career, Dwight has sold more than 25 million albums worldwide, earned 21 Grammy nominations and charted five Billboard No. 1 albums. He's done it without compromising his highgrade, hard-core, honky-tonk music ... or his attire, including the lowtilted Stetson that generally resides atop his dome and his painted-on Levi's, which not even Luke Bryan could squeeze into. While Dwight's instinctive approach to country music has been unconventional, his genius is undeniable.



#### DWIGHT YOAKAM CONTINUED

That genius began sprouting in 1956 in his Appalachian hometown of Pikeville, Ky., followed by his high school days in Columbus, Ohio, where he fronted garage bands and toured the Ohio Valley circuit. In 1977, he headed to Nashville, but Music City, which was being dominated by the sounds of Urban Cowboyism, spurned Dwight's "hard" honky-tonkin' country. Instead, a year later, he boot-scooted west to California, where progressive-minded musicians were melding the sounds of country with punk. The "cowpunk" scene, as it became known, served as an affable middle-finger salute to commercial country music. Mohawks and Stetsons. Signs and Wonders. Dwight landed gigs playing in Hollywood dive bars with cowpunkers like Rank and File, Lone Justice and The Knitters, as well as with rockers The Blasters and Los Lobos, and his Bakersfield brand of country music began to creep back east with the release of his six-song EP, Guitars, Cadillacs, Etc., Etc., by tiny Oak Records in 1984. By 1985, he had a deal with Warner Bros., and a rerelease of the album was in the works.

Dwight stayed true to his instincts on that first album. And he's remained true to those instincts with the release of his 27th-and latest-album, Second Hand Heart, which arrives via Warner Bros., where Dwight began his majorlabel recording career 30 years ago. It also afforded Dwight the chance to again work with the man who gave him that sage advice back at the Roxy Theatre, Lenny Waronker, executive producer of Second Hand Heart.

"It was the seminal piece of advice I've ever been given by anyone in the business," says Dwight, who also teamed up with Lenny on his 2012 critically acclaimed album, 3 Pears. "With Lenny, there is no ego involved."

"Ego." That's an interesting word that Dwight brings up, because early in his career the country music establishment branded Dwight "cocky." Nonconformists are often given that label because execs need round pegs





Dwight has always been a honky-tonk man, from the late 1950s with his grandmother (left) to his high school days in the 1970s (above), (Below) Dwight with heroes Johnny Cash (center) and Buck Owens.



#### THE MUSICIAN

"THERE WAS SOME RECKLESS ABANDON THAT THIS ALBUM TOOK ON WITH ME **CONTINUING TO PLAY ELECTRIC GUITAR** ON SOME OF THE TRACKS. IT BECOMES A LITTLE MORE AGGRESSIVE IN SOME WAYS. I AIN'T GOOD, BUT I'M LOUD."

to fit into round holes. Dwight is no round peg. Or, here's another school of thought: Dwight Yoakam is a madman.

There's a passage in Lewis Carroll's 1865 novel, Alice's Adventures in Wonderland, where the Mad Hatter asks, "Have I gone mad?" to which Alice replies, "I'm afraid so. You're entirely bonkers. But I'll tell you a secret. All the best people are." In that sense, Dwight

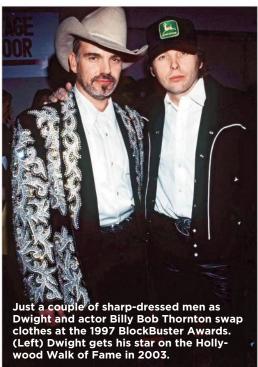
is one of the best people. If there's a fine line between genius and insanity, Dwight erases that line only for his own amusement. The latest case in point: Second Hand Heart, a superb album in which Dwight fuses his vast musical influences into a singular force.

The 10-song offering—of which Dwight wrote eight—is a menagerie of inspirations: Elvis Presley and Roy

#### THE ACT

"I KNOW THAT THE CRAFT OF ACTING IS NOT SOMETHING THAT HAPPENS BY ACCIDENT. IT HAS TO DO WITH THE RHYTHM OF TRUTH AND HOW YOU SAY WHAT YOU SAY AS AN ACTOR. THE OLD EXPRESSION, 'DOES SOMETHING HAVE THE RING OF TRUTH TO IT?' TO PUT IT ANOTHER WAY, 'DOES IT HAVE THE RHYTHM OF TRUTH TO IT?' IT'S A PERFORMANCE OF A SCRIPTED SCENARIO OF LIFE. THAT FICTIONAL SCRIPTING, AS WITH SONGWRITING, IS REALLY ADDRESSING LARGER COLLECTIVE UNIVERSAL TRUTHS."





Orbison in "Dreams of Clay"; The Ramones and Bill Monroe in "Man of Constant Sorrow"; Johnny Cash and Roger Miller in "Off Your Mind." And that's just for starters. Look deeper (or listen) and you'll hear The Beatles, The Byrds, The Everly Brothers and The Beach Boys. Dwight stands on the shoulders of his musical giants, hooting and swaggering like only he can. Within that

cadre of influences and songs, there's an encompassing sense of hope in Dwight's distinctive Kentucky croon, from the resilient opening track "In Another World" to the transcendent ballad "Believe" to the poetic, Faulkner-like "V's of Birds," which closes the album.

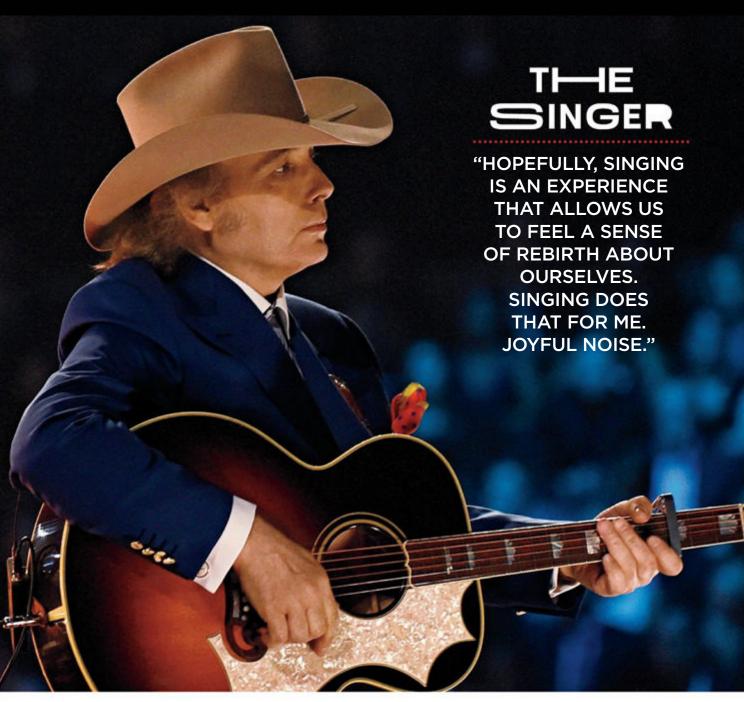
"Not by design, but hope became the theme of this album," says Dwight, now back on the topic of his new record.

### THE ROLE:

With appearances in more than 30 feature films and television shows, including Panic Room, Wedding Crashers and Under the Dome, Dwight Yoakam's acting chops are as lethal as his onstage dance moves. Speaking of lethal, Dwight's performance as abusive boyfriend Doyle Hargraves in 1996's Sling Blade, which was written and directed by Billy Bob Thornton, is still one for the ages.

"It will be 20 years ago this May that we shot it," says Dwight. "Wow. I can't believe that. It will always remain a magical experience for me. I had done five movies at that point. After being on set a couple of days and shooting a couple of my scenes, I remember calling my manager on the phone and saying, 'You know what, I think I'm in a real one here. something that will have an impact. I think Billy Bob is doing something unique and lasting as a director and writer.' I was really proud to be a part of it, and I still am."





#### **DWIGHT YOAKAM CONTINUED**

"There were a lot of tangent sorties, for lack of a better word, pathways that led to the journey's end of this album."

At this point, Dwight pauses for about 10 seconds, which feels like an eternity. But he's not waiting for a question. He's thinking. And thinking. And thinking, until . . .

"My songs are not specifically about the literal. The only song I've ever written literally was 'Floyd County' [from

1988's Buenas Noches From a Lonely Room] about the death of my grandfather and going to Floyd County, Kentucky, to attend the funeral and be there with my mother and aunts and uncle. I wrote that song in one of the most literal ways in terms of chronicling an actual event in my life. Other than that, I don't think there's ever been another song I've written from a literal experience. My songs have been composites of the collective experi-

ences I've had throughout my life and others' experiences that I've witnessed. Loss, loss of a lover, loss of a relationship, loss of a loved one. In Second Hand Heart, there's that, but more the expression of the belief in finding and realizing a rebirth of hope. I don't want to project onto it too much. It's music that coalesced on its own in this moment with this record."

Dwight pauses again. After a lengthy silence, his tone changes



#### THE SONGWRITE

#### "DON'T FIGHT THE INEVITABLE. DON'T SAY NO TO YES. BE OPEN TO THE JOURNEY TAKING YOU PLACES YOU DIDN'T PLAN."

from enlightening to pensive.

"I hope the album gives joy and a sense of belonging to anyone who hears it. We all can connect on something universal emotionally, and that's the emotional expression of music. Being something that releases us from feeling hopeless, even if it's for a second, and being humorous about this world and this life. The old Hank [Williams] Sr., Luke the Drifter idea of 'I'll never get out of this world alive.' None of us do, in fact, stay here forever, and we're not alone. That's what I'm trying to say about it. There's no conscious intent. There's no design. It's not a concept album. It's a collection of disparate songs that have a collective emotional response to each other. When you play them together like this. It's all something from inside of me in this moment now expressing itself and probably more a reminder

to me. I wasn't writing it as a pompous admonition to you or anyone else, probably just reminding myself. This album just kind of made itself. I've had that before to a degree once, but probably not since Guitars, Cadillacs. It's the only other album I can think of that had this self-realized journey."

Much of that journey took place in L.A.'s revered Capitol Studios, Studio B, where artists like Ray Charles and Dwight's hero Buck Owens recorded in the '50s and '60s. Dwight and his band-Brian Whelan (keyboard/guitar), Eugene Edwards (lead guitar), Jonathan Clark (bass), Mitch Marine (drums)—cut many of tracks in between gigs as they crossed the country on Eric Church's The Outsiders World Tour. Not only that, but the record was also made without Auto-Tune or time correction (vouches Grammy-winning engineer Chris Lord-Alge). That's because no

one-no one-sings like The Dwight Yoakam. And no one gives a more interesting interview than The Mad Hatter.

"What's Frank Zappa's great quote?" asks Dwight with a guttural belly laugh as we're wrapping up the interview. "Talking [writing] about music is like dancing about architecture. And that's the best I could do today. Dance for you about architecture. So I apologize if I haven't made much sense. Let me tell you this about the album," Dwight continues as he exhales deeply. "Every moment in the studio making this record was a joyful blessing. I'm a lucky guy to get to do this and make my living making music, performing and making this record. Thank you for allowing me to do this. I hope everyone enjoys it."

Dwight may be mad, but he's still the best kind, and he got that way by following his instincts. CW

# COUNIKY

Country music's biggest stars journey over the Atlantic Ocean to entertain our European friends at the **C2C Music Festival**.

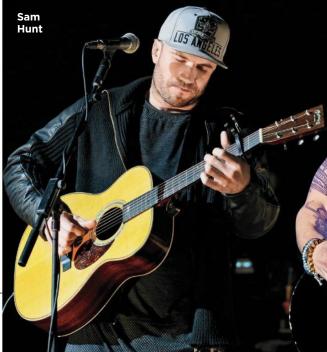
IF YOU'VE EVER FANCIED a pint with your mates and dreamed about hearing some smashing country tunes, then the C2C (Country to Country) Music Festival might be right up your alley. This year's trans-Atlantic country music excursion took some of the genre's best and brightest to major arena dates in London, England, as well as other European countries where people drive on the correct side of the road. The festival culminated with two massive shows: March 7 at Dublin, Ireland's



Dublin 3Arena and March 8 at London's gleaming O2 arena. Headliners for the events included top tier talent like Luke Bryan, Florida Geor-

gia Line, Jason Aldean, Lady Antebellum, Lee Ann Womack, Brandy Clark, Sam Hunt, Kip Moore and Brantley Gilbert. Additional performers included Nashville's Sam Palladio, Ward Thomas, The Shires and others. Prior to the shows in Dublin and London, the tour actually paused in Scandinavia for stops at the Ericsson Globe in Stockholm, Sweden, and the Oslo Spektrum in Oslo, Norway. This was C2C's fourth year running and it is clearly growing, as a fifth year is already on the books for March 11–13, with three shows taking place at the O2 in London as well as other tour stops in Dublin, Glasgow and elsewhere. Might be time to break out your passport and book a flight.



















# After a seven-year run, LUKE BRYAN performs his final spring break show at Spinnaker Beach Club. BY GAYLE THOMPSON LUKE BRYAN IS SAYING FEET

year since 2009, said this year's event would be his last.

"I think last year, we realized that we were feeling like it's time to turn the page in this chapter," he reveals to Country Weekly. "I've jokingly told people, the fact that I was able to do spring break shows all through my thirties and attend spring break without it being too weird, I feel like I cheated."

Luke also released his last spring break-themed album, Spring





*Break...Checkin' Out*, to coincide with his final show. "We felt like, put one more album out and kind of leave on a real high note," he adds. "But the energy that we don't put into spring break anymore will go into other projects, and other fun stuff, too."

While Luke admittedly hasn't figured out all the details, he hints that his new venture might still be beach-themed, just in another country. "We don't necessarily know yet," he acknowledges. "We started Crash My Playa down in Mexico this year, which was a really, really great experience for us. And then, we still have our Farm Tour shows, where we can possibly put songs out around Farm Tour."

Panama City Beach is already mourning the loss of Luke's

annual shows, and contemplating what might come next for the tourist town. "It's sad," says David Demarest, public relations manager of the Panama City Beach Convention and Visitors Bureau. "It is sad because he puts on such a great show, and he's such a great ambassador for the area. Before him, it was Kenny Chesney, who played a show at Spinnaker's, and then Kenny Chesney got really big. Then Luke Bryan came, and that's when Luke Bryan's career took off. So it could be that he could pass the torch to the next rising artist."

Luke's final spring break shows drew thousands of people each day, with hundreds lined up since early in the morning, hoping to get a glimpse of the superstar. From young teenagers to middle-aged parents, and even a few senior citizens, Luke's star appeal clearly knows no limits.

The sheer number of people who gather to see him perform, with more than 1.7 million attending his shows last year, still boggles his mind sometimes. But while he is arguably one of the most popular entertainers, of any genre, he adamantly refuses to become affected by his level of fame.

"I have been really blessed," he maintains. "I feel like, for me to enjoy my career, and this experience, being an entertainer and all this, I think you've got to stay humble and have humility to truly enjoy it, to where all of it doesn't get in your head and things get weird."

It's plain to see why Luke can easily sell out arenas in record time. The 38-year-old tore through some of his hits, like "Play



Now that Luke Bryan has performed his final two spring break shows at the Spinnaker Beach Club in Panama City Beach, Fla., there's room for someone else to fill that slot. Kenny Chesney was the first to perform at the waterfront venue, followed by Luke, who performed for seven years at Spinnaker's. Since both men went on to have superstar careers, it's time for someone else to carry the torch. Here are three of our top picks.

#### Sam Hunt

Sam has had two consecutive No. 1 singles, "Leave the Night On" and "Take Your Time," from his freshman Montevallo



#### Lee Brice

Lee pours his heart and soul into every performance, whether at a small venue or a large arena. We'd love to see what he'd do with the energetic, and diverse, Panama City Beach crowd.

#### Jake Owen

Jake is already a native Floridian, and he admittedly loves the water and watersports. He's even released several

summer-themed songs, including "Barefoot Blue Jean Night" and "Beachin."







#### LUKE BRYAN SPRING BREAK CONTINUED

It Again" and "That's My Kind of Night," but also covered other people's songs, including a medley of the Nitty Gritty Dirt Band's "Fishin' in the Dark," with Collective Soul's "Let Your Light Shine Down," and his spot-on rendition of the Steve Miller Band's "The Joker."

"I've been doing this for a long time," an exuberant Luke said when he took the stage, "and this is the biggest crowd I've ever seen."

His final two shows were bittersweet for the Georgia native, who said he became emotional seeing the throngs of people, filling every corner of Spinnaker's and covering the beach, gathered for his final concerts.

"There's no doubt I'll miss it," he says. "I will certainly miss being here, being on the beach, doing the shows, seeing the fans and doing the albums, and being creative and making the albums. So no question, I'll definitely miss that."

But his spring break shows have only been part of an awardwinning career, which already includes almost 7 million albums sold, 27 million digital downloads and 12 No. 1 singles. In addition, his iconic career is going to be part of an upcoming exhibit at the Country Music Hall of Fame and Museum, Luke Bryan: Dirt Road Diary, which opens on May 22.

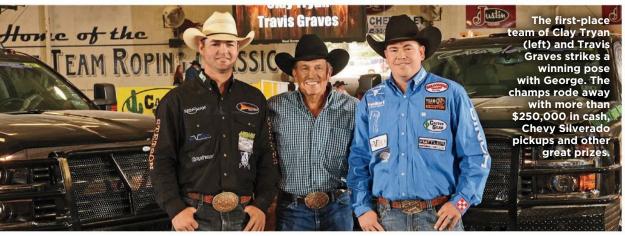
While he concedes he is sometimes surprised at his own level of success, he also uses that to dictate how he lives his life, both in and out of the public eye. "I want to look back one day and know that I really, really stayed myself through all of this, and didn't let it mysteriously depress me for some reason," he says.

"I just want to enjoy it. So many times in my life, I could have deviated down a different path, so that I didn't wind up here. So the fact that I was able to move to Nashville, and have a lot of my dreams come true, I really cherish that, and I would hate to ever really get in a dark place with all of this. I just love being a country music singer, and hopefully being somebody positive." CW



George with some of the event sponsors: (from left) **Dustin Noblitt, Re**sistol; Louis Russo, Justin Boots; Ricky Bolin, Resistol; Robert Lever, Wrangler; George; J.D. Yates, Team Roper; and Dean Tufton, DT Quarter Horses. George, sitting atop a fine quarter horse, used to compete in the event but now serves as host.





t all happened out of the blue, as best as Troy Gentry can remember. Troy and his Montgomery Gentry duo partner, Eddie Montgomery, were rocking a Nashville club during their fan club party at the 2014 CMA Music Festival, ripping through their biggest hits, like "My Town" and "One in Every Crowd." They took a few moments to catch their collective breath when some unfamiliar faces took the stage. They came bearing some happy tidings for the duo.

"They were from the Kentucky Music Hall of Fame, and during this little intermission, they announced that Eddie and I would be

inducted in this year's class," says Troy. "We didn't see that coming at all. That was the furthest thing from my mind. It definitely caught us off guard, but it was awesome."

Troy and Eddie, both natives of the Bluegrass State, receive their official induction on April 10 at the Hall's location in Renfro Valley, Ky. It's certainly not lost on Troy that they'll be joining an august body of entertainers representing several musical genres. Start with Bill Monroe and Loretta Lynn and go from there.

"Kentucky has such a great musical tradition from all styles," Troy explains. "There are so many artists and even actors who are in the Kentucky hall. I didn't realize until I went back

through the list that Florence Henderson was a member. And George Clooney's aunt [popular '50s songstress Rosemary Clooney] has also been inducted. Eddie and I were talking about how much talent has come out of Kentucky, and it's really cool."

And amazing, as well. For a relatively small state, Kentucky has produced some mighty substantial artists. Chalk that up to the state's diverse musical geography, Troy states. "Over in eastern Kentucky," Troy begins, "you've got the Appalachian area, which is a real touchstone of bluegrass. Then you have the southern part of Kentucky, just a stone's throw away from Nashville. So, there is more of a country influence coming out of that area."



Troy further explains that his hometown of Lexington also rules as a musical focal point. The college town, home to the University of Kentucky, is surrounded by bars and small performing venues, where locals can hear everything from straight-up country to honky-tonk roots music and even a little bit of rock. Troy, who started his career as a solo singer, paid his musical dues in the city's hot spots.

"Lexington had probably about eight live venues that people played all the time," Troy recalls. "And about 30 minutes down the road is Richmond, which is also a big college town [Eastern Kentucky University is located there] that had about three or four country music clubs

that we would all play. That was the way to cut your teeth."

As far as influences, they weren't the Kentucky-bred stalwarts who you might expect, like Dwight Yoakam or Ricky Skaggs. Instead, Troy followed the local musicians in the area, particularly a singer named Greg Austin, who fronted a popular band. "He was huge when I started playing," Troy remembers warmly. "The band was influential as far as learning to play clubs and working a crowd. They were really good at that. And through Greg, I met John Michael Montgomery, Eddie's brother, which led to me getting introduced to Eddie. All of those working musicians were a huge influence on me."

On the same hand, Eddie, born in Danville, Ky., became immersed in music through his dad, Harold, who performed in clubs and bars around the state. Eddie was wailing on drums and vocals in his dad's band from the time he was a teenager. So, when the team of Montgomery Gentry made their debut in 1999, both Troy and Eddie were seasoned performers who could handle any live situation.

The duo will be duly inducted into the Kentucky Music Hall of Fame because of their impressive track record over the last 15 years. They've scored such No. 1 hits as "If You Ever Stop Loving Me," "Something to Be Proud Of" and "Lucky Man," and won the Country Music Association award for

## All-Star ★ Hall ★

**MONTGOMERY GENTRY** is going into the Kentucky Music Hall of Fame on April 10. It's a place you might like to visit sometime, so here are a few fun facts about the Kentucky hall.

#### LOCATION

Renfro Valley, Ky., about 40 miles south of Lexington.

#### INDUCTEES

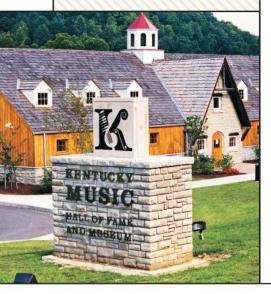
Loretta Lynn, Bill Monroe, The Everly Brothers, Red Foley, Tom T. Hall, Ricky Skaggs, Dwight Yoakam, Crystal Gayle, Patty Loveless, The Kentucky Headhunters, Exile, John Conlee and Wynonna and Naomi Judd, among many others.

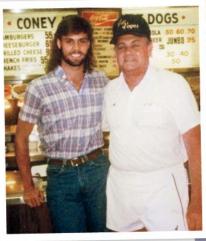
#### **WHAT TO SEE**

Rare archival material and artifacts, memorabilia from the inducted artists and an instrument room.

#### WEBSITE

kentuckymusicmuseum.com





(Clockwise from above) Troy with father Lloyd Gentry; Eddie and Troy receive the CMA Duo of the Year award in 2000; rippin' it Montgomery Gentry style.





#### MONTGOMERY GENTRY

Vocal Duo of the Year in 2000. Their hard-driving hybrid of country and Southern rock won over fans immediately and continues to draw new legions to the fold.

Armed with a new record label, Montgomery Gentry will soon be releasing their first album of new material in nearly four years, Folks Like Us. The title single has hit radio and lands squarely in the MG wheelhouse, with its testaments to smalltown life and all-American values.

"It's one of those good Montgomery Gentry songs that talks about faith, pride in our country and hardworking Americans," Troy says. "It has a little bit of everything in this one song that Eddie and I are so proud to sing about. The first time I heard it," Troy adds with emphasis, "I knew it had

the potential to be a hit song."

Troy acknowledges that it's been a long wait for fans between albums. But the new effort is just about ready to hit the launch pad. "We have everything selected for the album," Troy says. "We just need to get it all packaged up and everything. It's exciting to get new music out."

But before that, there's an induction ceremony on the calendar. The Kentucky Music Hall of Fame has come calling, and Troy and Eddie will be on hand to answer the bell, along with songwriter Larry Cordle and other fellow inductees. "This was the kind of thing I thought would have come closer to the ending of your career," Troy admits. "But it's a real highlight for us. It's very flattering to be included with such great talent." CW



Charles Town, W.Va.

Hollywood Casino

#### **April 10**

Wetumpka, Ala.

Wind Creek Hotel & Casino

#### April 11

Fort Lauderdale, Fla.

Tortuga Festival

#### **April 23**

St. Charles. III.

Arcada Theatre

#### April 24

Manistee, Mich.

Little River Casino Resort

#### **April 25**

Baraboo. Wis.

Ho-Chunk Casino

#### May 5

Bakersfield, Calif.

Bright House Amphitheater

#### June 6

Laughlin, Nev.

Edgewater Hotel & Casino

#### June 7

Santa Rosa, Calif.

Country Summer Music Festival

#### June 13

North Lawrence, Ohio

The Country Fest at Clay's Park Resort

#### June 18

Meridian, Miss.

MSU Riley Center for the Performing Arts

#### June 25

Billings, Mont.

Rimrock Auto Arena

#### June 26

Cardwell, Mont.

Headwaters Country Jam

Wendover, Nev.

Peppermill Concert Hall

#### **July 16**

Manchester, Iowa

Delaware County Fair

#### July 24

Cheyenne, Wyo.

Cheyenne Frontier Days

#### July 29

Goshen, Ind.

Elkhart County 4-H Fair

#### Aug. 7

Lancaster, Pa.

American Music Theatre

#### Aug. 20

New Milford, Pa.

Harford Fair

SCHOOL IS IN SESSION

With music on her mind, **RaeLynn** moves to the head of the class.

STORY BY TRICIA DESPRES



Music in Our Schools Tour, rising country star RaeLynn was approached by a young girl eager to get a glimpse of one of her musical heroes. And as nervousness and excitement and love rushed through her body at a fever pitch, the young girl with the big musical dreams began to cry.

And immediately RaeLynn could relate to this little girl whom she had never met before.

"I mean, I almost cried when I first met Miranda [Lambert] because she was everything I wanted to be," RaeLynn recently told Country Weekly during her Chicago stop on her weeklong bus tour celebrating the 30th anniversary of National Music in Our Schools Month. "I was just so excited to meet her, and now to be that person to someone else is so humbling. It's definitely been the coolest part of the tour. I will never forget it."

The week itself had the makings of being a memorable one from the very beginning, with RaeLynn not only stopping at schools from New York to Illinois, but making a special appearance on NBC's Today show and releasing her new single, "For a Boy." Yet it was the interaction with the music-loving children, culminating in a Grand Ole Opry performance alongside students of Nashville's Head Middle Magnet School, that made such an impression on the blonde from Texas.

"I have met kids over the last few days that don't even have a choir class at their school," explains RaeLynn, looking much too bright and cheery considering it was the early morning hours of March 12. "These students give up their recess time and their lunch period to do choir. I mean, can you imagine the determination it takes for a third and fourth grader to do that? It's just amazing. Every kid is creative in their own way, whether in sports or art or music. Because of that, I just believe that music should never be cut out of these kids' daily classes."















Of course, it wasn't that long ago that the 20-year-old was just a musicaddicted student herself, walking the same similar halls and eating in the same similar cafeterias as the students she met on this worthwhile tour. "When I walk into these schools, part of me is like, 'I don't miss this,' and part of me is like, 'It's so cool to be back," recalls RaeLynn, who will go out on the road as part of Rascal Flatts' Riot Tour 2015 this summer. "The part that I don't miss is being in a classroom and studying 24/7 and waking up early, but I do miss the routine of knowing what class I'm going to go to and what friends I am going to see every day."

A self-proclaimed straight-A student ("OK, maybe I did get a few Bs") who had a tendency of talking too much ("I got called down to the principal twice, and both times it was because of talking"), RaeLynn recalls her school days as the time of her life, once she began to recognize the musical talents she had been blessed with. "When I was in sixth grade, band and choir was full, so I decided to play the cello," she remembers. "I was always the person that wanted to be different. Everybody was in the choir and everyone was in the band, and when I decided to join the school orchestra, everyone wanted to play the violin or the viola. So," she says, laughing, "I played the cello."

Fast-forward seven or so years, and RaeLynn says she has to pinch herself to remind herself that her cello-playing time is behind her, and she now gets to bring the message of keeping music in schools across the country alongside the National Association for Music Education, Give a Note Foundation and Radio Disney.

RaeLynn says that one of the most surreal moments of the tour has been the chance to hear students at each school unite in the singing of "Always Sing," a song written specifically for the Music in Our Schools initiative by RaeLynn alongside songwriters Nicolle Galyon and Jimmy Robbins. "At each stop, we



do this mini-concert that included 'Always Sing' along with 'For a Boy' and 'God Made Girls'," the Season 2 Voice alum says. "It's been so cool to meet all of these kids and talk about how music is a way of life."

It was also cool for each and every lucky student who got to sing alongside RaeLynn and shake RaeLynn's hand to realize that maybe, just maybe, their dreams might also have a chance of coming true.

"You know, I didn't win [The Voice], and I love that because it allows me to tell these kids that it doesn't matter where you are in life or where you live or what you do. If you have a dream and a passion, you can make anything happen," RaeLynn says. "It's

**"EVERY KID IS CREATIVE** IN THEIR OWN WAY, WHETHER IN SPORTS OR ART OR MUSIC." something I lived by back when I was their age. And then, when I didn't win the show, it actually fired me up even more because I knew what I wanted for myself. Any kid can do what they put their heart to doing. Heck, you might get told a million times no, and then you are going to get told yes a few times. Everyone's path is different, but you can make it happen."

And now, RaeLynn prepares to take the inspiration she has gained from these special students she met on the road back into the studio with her in Nashville. "This whole experience will definitely inspire what I write next," she says with a telltale smile. "This experience has changed me." CW



#### SINGLES

#### KACEY MUSGRAVES

"Biscuits"
MERCURY RECORDS

GRADE: B+

While this bears some thematic similarity to Kacey's previous anthem, "Follow Your Arrow," it's not quite as bold a statement. Nonetheless, Kacey's exhortation to *mind your own biscuits* is a message that all of us should bear in mind. Basically, "Biscuits" is reminding us not to put down folks simply because their pendulums swing a little differently than ours. This comes from the same writing team behind "Follow Your Arrow," namely Kacey, Brandy Clark and Shane McAnally, so to see a strikingly similar narrative isn't all that surprising. Like "Arrow," the message is delivered with a catchy, singalong melody that actually complements the somewhat deep subject matter. This further cements Kacey's status as one of our finest storytellers, fueled by her witty and perceptive insight on everyday human behavior.

- BOB PAXMAN

**AT A GLANCE:** "Biscuits" served up with wit and candor.



#### LADY ANTEBELLUM

"Long Stretch of Love" CAPITOL RECORDS

GRADE: B

Written by all three members of Lady Antebellum with Josh Kear, the group's latest single, "Long Stretch of Love," is a chest-thumping commitment to love and stick-

ing with it through the ups and downs, no matter what. Lady A has mentioned that they are big fans of Fleetwood Mac, and perhaps it is the power of suggestion prevailing, but it seems that a pop/rock influence is more prominent now than ever before, both in production and lyrics.

Much like many of the tracks on the trio's current album, 747, "Long Stretch of Love" is driving, edgy and electric. Brash kick drum, thumping bass and crunchy electric guitar riffs dominate the track, occasionally to the detriment of the band's thick and beautiful harmonies, which sometimes get overpowered in the mix. However, the combination does add to the aggressive nature of the lyrics, making the tune a melodic argument where everyone wins.

With the fearless approach that Lady Antebellum has when it comes to releasing singles from 747, they are positioning themselves for a (long) new journey.

— TAMMY RAGUSA

**AT A GLANCE:** It's a bit of a stretch to call it country, but it's no stretch at all to call it good.



#### DRAKE WHITE

"It Feels Good"
DOT RECORDS

GRADE: B+

Country fans like to place a premium on artists being authentic, or at least the appearance of it. Without trying to figure whether he is or isn't, let's just say Drake White gives the appearance of authenticity, and his new single, the gospel-tinged "It Feels Good," wisely puts him in more

down-home settings than, say, a Sam Hunt-type production would. There are no loops or synthesizers here, just a stomp-and-clap beat, acoustic guitars and a harmonica melody that's doubled on mandolin. Even the electric instruments take a backseat to the rhythm. And to his credit, Drake is a full-on howler of a vocalist, with a rough-edged tone that sounds great at full belt or dialed back. The lyrics maybe put a couple poetic flourishes on the whole backwoods, moonshine sippin', creek dippin' trope but aren't really all that interesting. This one's all about the groove and the church revival fervor it stirs up by the end. Which seems appropriate, because you'll have to take it on faith that he's the real deal.

**-JON FREEMAN** 

AT A GLANCE: A party jam masquerading as hillbilly soul.

GRADES: A OUTSTANDING | B ABOVE AVERAGE | C AVERAGE | D BELOW AVERAGE | F #FAIL



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#### ON THE EDGE



#### FOR FANS OF:

Wanda Jackson, Loretta Lynn, Dwight Yoakam

TO PARAPHRASE AN oft-stated line about actors, there are no small gigs, only small performers. In other words, a savvy entertainer can parlay any opportunity into prospective gold. That's exactly what Sarah Gayle Meech has done with her residency at one of

Nashville's famed honky-tonks, Robert's Western World, over the last five years.

Sarah Gayle, a native of Washington state, has been a fixture at Robert's, drawing huge and enthusiastic crowds each weekend and confidently building a loyal fan base. Fans crowd the stage to catch her deft mixture of traditional roots country and gritty blues, complemented by her observant songwriting.

The year is already booming for Sarah Gayle. She recently released her latest album, Tennessee Love Song, made an appearance on ABC's hit show Nashville and copped an Ameripolitan award for Best Female Outlaw. "I guess it's all starting to happen because I play so much," Sarah Gayle notes. "It seems like I'm playing all the time. When I look at my schedule over the last few years, I think I average about 200 shows a year, and that doesn't always include tour dates. Nashville is such a popular spot for tourists and a lot of them come to Robert's, which is a great platform for exposure."

In fact, one of her shows at Robert's was enough to intrigue those behind the popular prime-time drama Nashville. "The director came into Robert's one night and saw me," Sarah Gayle begins. "Apparently, he bought my CD at

> the club. Heck, I would have given it to him. A couple weeks later, I got a call from the music supervisor. The show wanted to have me featured playing at Robert's, and they shot the scene there." After pausing to catch her breath, Sarah Gayle laughs and admits, "I got lucky. But it really helped me. I saw a big spike in my social media pages and I got a ton of really great compliments."

Count Sarah Gayle among the current crop of females earning a welcome entry into a male-dominated arena. She'll earnestly maintain, however, that making statements is not the aim. "If I make a statement to somebody or inspire somebody, then that's great," she says. "But I'm not preaching about anything. I just do what I do and just keep trucking along."

- BOB PAXMAN



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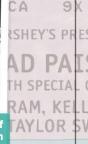
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#### CROSSWORD SOLUTION (See Page 78)

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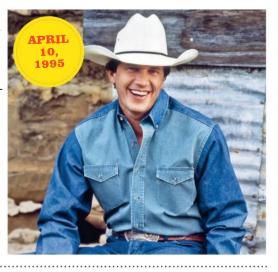


**DAVID FRIZZELL** and **SHELLY WEST** truly had music in the blood, with David being the younger brother of the legendary Lefty Frizzell and Shelly the daughter of the dynamic Dottie West. In keeping with their respective legacies, the duo titled their first album Carryin' On the Family Names, and it featured a romantic number called "You're the Reason God Made Oklahoma." In The Billboard Book of No. 1 Country Hits, Shelly remembered that David instinctively knew that "Oklahoma" would be a smash single. "With his faith in it, he made me

believe in it," Shelly said. David's gut feeling proved right on the money. "You're the Reason God Made Oklahoma" hit No. 1 on April 11, 1981, and helped propel David and Shelly to the 1981 Country Music Associa-

tion award for Vocal Duo of the Year.

Twenty years ago, on April 10, 1995, **GEORGE STRAIT** walked into Emerald Sound Studios in Nashville and recorded what would become one of his best-loved hits. George laid down the vocals for the warmly nostalgic tune "Check Yes or No" along with "I Know She Still Loves Me." both released as singles later that year. "Check Yes or No" checked in at No. 1 in November and stayed at the top four consecutive weeks. In 1996, the song won the Country Music Association award for Single of the Year. "I Know She Still Loves Me," released in December 1995, peaked at the No. 5 spot.





**CARRIE UNDERWOOD** seemed a natural fit for the silver screen, with her blond, girl-next-door appeal and her ease in front of the camera. Carrie landed her first movie role in the inspirational film *Soul Surfer*, which premiered to nationwide audiences on April 8, 2011. Soul Surfer told the true story of surfer Bethany Hamilton, who faced the challenges of the sport after recovering from a terrible shark attack. Carrie played the role of Sarah Hill, a church youth ministry leader and, by all accounts, turned in a respectable performance.

To read more on Bobby Bare, go to CountryWeekly.com/magazine/vault

#### **BIRTHDAYS**



#### BOBBY

was born in Ironton, Ohio, and turns the milestone age of 80 this year. His best-known singles include "Detroit City," "Four Strong Winds" and "Dropkick Me, Jesus."

**APRIL 6, 1937** MERLE HAGGARD

**APRIL 7, 1951** 

JOHN DITTRICH of Restless Heart

**APRIL 8, 1960** JOHN SCHNEIDER

**APRIL 9. 1953** HAL KETCHUM

**APRIL 10, 1981** LAURA BELL BUNDY

**APRIL 11, 1957** JIM LAUDERDALE

> **APRIL 11, 1964** STEVE AZAR

**APRIL 12, 1957** VINCE GILL

**APRIL 12, 1982** EASTON CORBIN

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#### SINGLES



Luke checks out on top. With first-week sales of 106,000 units, his final spring break release is his fifth album to debut at No. 1.

Brett Eldredge's third Billboard No. 1 single is the latest in a line of consecutive charttoppers from his debut album, Bring You Back.





Sam Hunt's harrowing second video enters the Top 10 at No. 8 two weeks after its debut.

	C	MT VIDEOS
THIS WEEK	LAST WEEK	TITLE/ARTIST
1	1	LONELY TONIGHT • BLAKE SHE TON FEAT. ASHLEY MONROE
2	2	MAKE ME WANNA THOMAS RHETT
3	3	JUST GETTIN' STARTED JASON ALDEAN
4	4	MEAN TO ME BRETT ELDREDGE
5	6	HOMEGROWN HONEY DARIUS RUCKER
6	5	LONELY EYES CHRIS YOUNG
7	8	DRINKING CLASS LEE BRICE
8	12	TAKE YOUR TIME SAM HUNT
9	9	LIKE A COWBOY RANDY HOUSER
10	11	SAY YOU DO DIERKS BENTLEY



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The Swon Brothers take their late-night appetites to the Snow White Drive In n Lebanon, Tenn., at No. 10.					
GAC VIDEOS					
HIS /EEK	LAST WEEK	TITLE/ARTIST	Γ		
1	4	LONELY TONIGHT • BLAKE SI TON FEAT. ASHLEY MONROE			
2	1	LITTLE TOY GUNS CARRIE UNDERWOOD			
3	2	TALLADEGA ERIC CHURCH			
4	3	SUN DAZE FLORIDA GEORGIA LIN	E		
5	7	LONELY EYES CHRIS YOUNG			
6	9	DRINKING CLASS LEE BRICE			
7	8	JUST GETTIN' STARTED JASON ALDEAN			

LAYLOW

JOSH TURNER

PRAY FOR YOU

SOMETHING IN THE WATER

CARRIE UNDERWOOD

THE SWON BROTHERS

8 10

9 6

10

SOURCE: GAO

TITLE/ARTIST TITLE/ARTIST SPRING BREAK . . . CHECKIN' OUT MEAN TO ME 1 2 1 BRETT ELDREDGE LUKE BRYAN JUST GETTIN' STARTED MONTEVALLO 2 1 2 1 JASON ALDEAN SAM HUNT AIN'T WORTH THE WHISKEY 3 SHANIA: STILL THE ONE-LIVE FROM VEGAS COLE SWINDELL 3 2 SHANIA TWAIN LONELY EYES 4 5 CHRIS YOUNG OLD BOOTS, NEW DIRT 4 3 JASON ALDEAN HOMEGROWN 5 9 ZAC BROWN BAND SPRING BREAK ... THE SET LIST: THE COMPLETE 5 HOMEGROWN HONEY SPRING BREAK COLLECTION ZINEPAK • LUKE BRYAN 6 6 DARIUS RUCKER ANYTHING GOES
FLORIDA GEORGIA LINE TAKE YOUR TIME 6 4 7 10 SAM HUNT DRINKING CLASS IGNITE THE NIGHT 8 8 7 7 LEE BRICE CHASE RICE LONELY TONIGHT 9 THE OUTSIDERS BLAKE SHELTON FEAT, ASHLEY MONROE 8 6 ERIC CHURCH SAY YOU DO 10 11 DIERKS BENTLEY **GREATEST HITS: DECADE #1** 9 5 CARRIE UNDERWOOD RAISE 'EM UP 12 11 KEITH URBAN FEATURING ERIC CHURCH PLATINUM 10 A GUY WALKS INTO A BAR MIRANDA LAMBERT 12 13 TURN IT ON (EP) SMOKE 13 15 11 A THOUSAND HORSES ELI YOUNG BAND WHAT WE AIN'T GOT **CRASH MY PARTY** 14 14 12 10 JAKE OWEN LUKE BRYAN DON'T IT 15 17 **GREATEST HITS SO FAR...** BILLY CURRINGTON 13 11 ZAC BROWN BAND WILD CHILD 16 18 KENNY CHESNEY WITH GRACE POTTER MAN AGAINST MACHINE 14 12 GARTH BROOKS DIAMOND RINGS AND OLD BARSTOOLS 17 20 TIM McGRAW WITH CATHERINE DUNN COLE SWINDELL 15 15 LITTLE RED WAGON 18 16 COLE SWINDELL MIRANDA LAMBERT BABY BE MY LOVE SONG 19 21 16 19 BRANTLEY GILBERT **FASTON CORBIN** SHE DON'T LOVE YOU **BRINGING BACK THE SUNSHINE** 20 19 ERIC PAISLEY 17 18 BLAKE SHELTON CRUSHIN' IT 22 21 PAIN KILLER BRAD PAISLEY 17 18 LITTLE BIG TOWN LITTLE TOY GUYS 22 23 CARRIE UNDERWOOD THE UNDERDOG 19 8 SIPPIN' ON FIRE AARON WATSON 23 26 FLORIDA GEORGIA LINE I DON'T DANCE HARD TO BE COOL 20 22 24 25 LEE BRICE LOVE ME LIKE YOU MEAN IT THE COWBOY RIDES AWAY: LIVE FROM AT&T 25 24 21 13 **STADIUM • GEORGE STRAIT** KELSEA BALLERINI

LOVE YOU LIKE THAT

KISS YOU IN THE MORNING

CANAAN SMITH

MICHAEL RAY

JOSH TURNER

YOUNG & CRAZY

LAY LOW

TROUBLE

GLORIANA

26 27

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24 25 METAMODERN SOUNDS IN COUNTRY MUSIC

THE BIG REVIVAL

KENNY CHESNEY

STURGILL SIMPSON

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DIERKS BENTLEY

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RISER

SUNDOWN HEAVEN TOWN

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#### Quickie Quiz



- 1. Pop sensation and multiple Grammy winner SAM SMITH has said he wants to collaborate with country singer...
- a. Brandy Clark
- b. Miranda Lambert
- c. Kacey Musgraves
- 2. ASHLEY MONROE is featured on which one of these country songs?
- a. "Lonely Eyes"
- b. "Lonely Tonight"
- c. "Hope You Get Lonely Toniaht"



#### 3. Who took home three big Grammy awards this year?







Harris

Emmylou Rodney Crowell

Rosanne Cash

- 4. The Civil War miniseries To Appomattox will include in its cast which country group or duo?
- a. Rascal Flatts
- b. Zac Brown Band
- c. Big & Rich



- 5. What character will **BLAKE SHELTON** portray in the western comedy Ridiculous 6?
- a. Doc Holliday
- **b.** Wyatt Earp
- c. Jesse James

**VARMERS:** J-C; Z-b; 3-C; 4-a; 5-b

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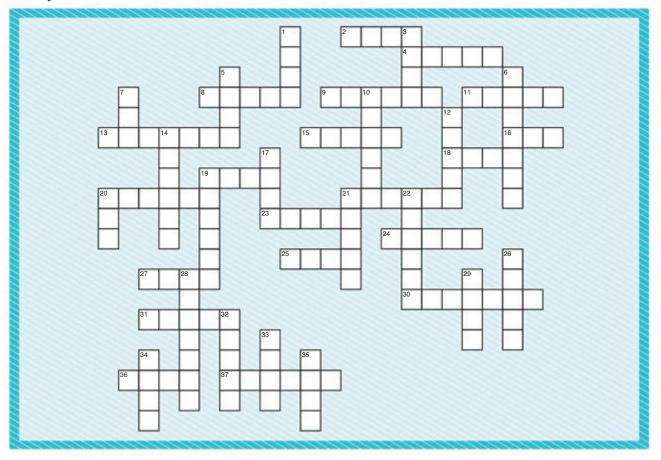


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#### CROSSWORD



#### **ACROSS**

- 2 In \_\_\_\_ Veritas (Latin)
- 4 "That's How Country Boys Roll" singer
- 8 Filipino WBO welterweight champ Pacquiao
- New country artist Mo \_\_\_\_
- 11 "It's Not Love (But It's Not Bad)" singer
- Randy Houser's "How Feels"
- 45 Alabama's "Mountain \_\_\_\_"
- Lonestar's "What About \_\_\_\_"
- 18 Tim McGraw's "\_\_\_ When"
- (19) "Chillin' It" singer
- 20 Greek letter
- 2 Paddington actress
- Kenny Chesney's "Don't

- Happen \_\_\_\_"
- 4 "Don't Ya" singer
- 25 Josh Turner's "All Me"
- 27 Josh Gracin's "Nothin' to "
- 30 Border city in Arizona
- 3 Rascal Flatts' "\_\_\_ Days"
- 36 Ferlin Husky's "Wings of a \_\_\_
- 37 Hal Ketchum's "Past the Point of \_\_\_\_'

#### **DOWN**

- 1 "Made in America" singer
- Woodwind instrument
- Tough Little Boys singer
- 6 "Sunshine & Whiskey" singer
- 7 Jessica Andrews' "\_\_\_\_ I Am"
- Capital of Taiwan

- 12 "You'll Think of Me" singer
- Ray Price's "Heartaches by the \_\_\_\_'
- Dexterous; skillful
- "Just a Dream" singer
- 20 New country artist Jackie \_\_\_\_
- 20 Scandal actress Washington
- 22 NASCAR driver Truex
- 26 Zac Brown Band's " Annie"
- 28 Frankenstein author Mary \_\_\_\_
- 29 Artificial or imitation; fake
- 32 University in Atlanta
- Hank Williams' "Highway"
- Mark Chesnutt's "Too \_\_\_\_ at Home"
- 35 Kelly Clarkson's "Don't"



**†** Glittering faceted cross design captures the luminous sparkle of crystal

Crystalline Cross

- † Thomas Kinkade's vibrant chapel artwork montage is enhanced by the masterfully hand-crafted cross
- **♣** Scripture-inspired words convey an uplifting message in golden letters

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I like it when . . .

My flight is on time.

My favorite TV show is . . . UPtv.

My favorite color is . . . Green.

If I could change one thing about myself it would be . . .

My desire to eat chocolate-covered M&M peanuts late at night.

I would love to do a duet with . . .

Anita Baker. -

A guy can never have too many . . . Plastic Ziploc gallon-size freezer bags.

The one word that describes my day today is . . .

Over.

I wish I were . . .

In Hawaii.

Music is . . .

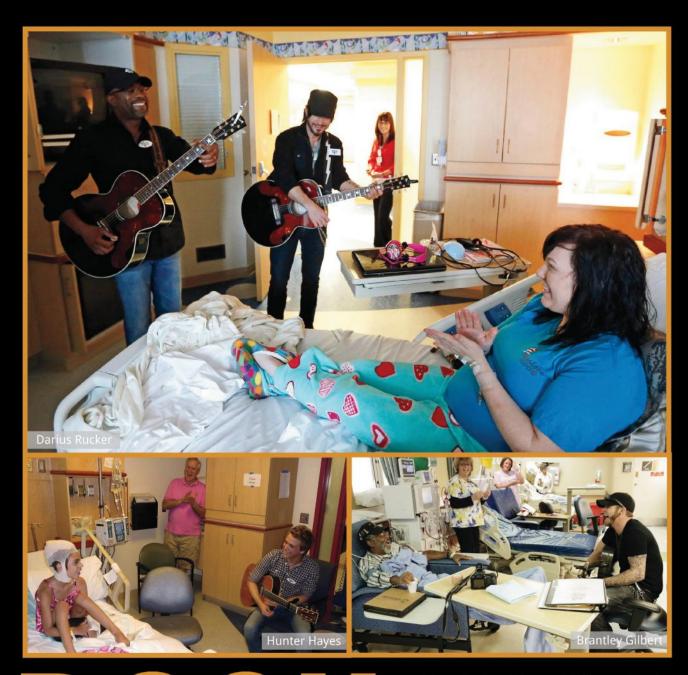
Coming, just wait!

The first thing I do in the morning is . . .

Check my Twitter page.

I can't live without . . . Coffee.





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